BEAUTY and the BEAST.

Santa-Claus Series.

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BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

A LONG TIME AGO, in a far distant country, there lived a very rich merchant who had three daughters whom he loved most dearly.

All three had grown up with a fair share of good looks, and each had all the accomplishments usual to young ladies in those days; but the youngest so far surpassed her sisters, and in fact all the other young girls of that time and country, in loveliness, that she was known universally by the name of Beauty, a name which had been given to her in childhood, and the fitness of which had caused it to cling to her as she grew up.

And Beauty was as superior to her sisters in disposition as in person: for while they were vain and haughty, proud of their wealth and splendor, and overbearing in their manners towards those whom they thought to be their inferiors; she was of a most sweet and kindly nature, free from all selfishness, and in the habit of finding her chief delight in trying to make other people happy.

After many years of prosperity, it came to pass, finally, that ill fortune fell to the share of the merchant, and that in no small measure either. His warehouses were burned, his ships

BEAUTY AT HER SPINNING WHEEL.

were lost at sea, and his trusted agents and clerks proved dishonest and robbed him. So many, and so quickly following, were these disasters, that in a very short time he saw nearly the whole of his riches swept away, barely enough being left to support himself and his daughters in the most humble way of living. They had to give up their fine houses, and all the good things to which they had been used, and were forced to go to live at some distance from the city, in a little cottage which, with the small farm about it, was nearly all that the father had been able to save.

It was with loud lamentations that the two elder sisters submitted to this hard fate, and their father's sorrow was made more bitter by their constant complaints. Beauty, alone of his children, yielded with resignation to what could not be helped, and tried to make the best of their altered circumstances.

Not that she did not feel the hardship of her change of condition, nor miss the comforts and pleasures that long habit had made seem to be necessities. Indeed, she was human enough to shed many tears in secret

BEAUTY'S INDUSTRY.

over the contrast between her present and former states; but she had sense enough to see the uselessness of such regrets, and too much kindness to add to others' pain by her repinings. So she bravely put on a cheerful air, and set to work to be as useful as possible to her father and sisters. She did not shrink from the most disagreeable tasks, and kept herself busy from morning till night, sewing, spinning, baking, cleaning, washing the dishes, and doing all the other drudgery that in her former home had been the task of servants. She got but little help, or even sympathy from her sisters, for they would not reconcile themselves to their poverty, and felt almost angry with her for showing so contented a spirit in so

wretched a lot. But her father did not fail to set a right value upon the fine qualities she displayed, and her sweet ways were his comfort and consolation in the dark days that had fallen upon him.

After about a year and a half had passed, news came one day that caused a great flutter in the family. It was that one of the merchant's ships which had been thought to be lost, had come safe to port, having been delayed all this time by storms and unfavorable winds. The two elder sisters were greatly excited, and indulged in the wildest hopes of being restored to their former splendor. When their father set out for the city to take steps to recover his property, they loaded him with commissions to bring them fine dresses and jewels upon his return. Observing that Beauty asked for nothing, her father said to her:

"Well, Beauty, do you desire no gifts? Is there nothing that you would have me bring you from the city?"

Beauty replied that his safe return was all that she wished for, but upon her father's urging her, for his pleasure, to name something that would be acceptable to her, she said:

"Well, dear father, bring me a rose. I have seen none since we have been here, and I love them so dearly."

The merchant then started upon his journey. When he reached the city, he found that while it was indeed true that one of his ships had come in, the people who had been his partners in business had taken advantage of his absence to sell the ship and its cargo, and had divided the

BEAUTY'S MODEST REQUEST.

THE MERCHANT STARTS FOR THE CITY.

money amongst themselves. He went to law to obtain his share, but after long worry and delay, succeeded in getting very little more than enough to pay the expenses to which he had been put, and he started for home nearly as poor as when he left it.

He lost his way upon the journey, and after wandering for some time, came to a stately palace surrounded by beautiful grounds. Thinking to inquire his way, he rode up to the entrance and knocked, but received no answer. He turned to go, but as he was leaving he noticed some lovely roses, and remembering Beauty's request, thought it would be no harm to pluck one for her. He had no sooner done so, than he heard a most terrible roar, and looking round, beheld a frightful creature, with the head of a wild beast, that glared at him ferociously, and said, in blood-curdling tones:

"Insolent wretch! do you dare to steal my roses? Your death shall be the penalty."

The merchant fell at the creature's feet, and begged for pardon, saying that he did not dream that the plucking of a rose would so offend, and explaining that it was his desire to comply with his dear child's request that had led him to commit the act.

"Well," said the Beast, "I will spare your life on one condition. You say that you have three daughters. I will let you go home, if you will promise to return at the end of a week with one of them to take your place. But bear in mind that she must come willingly; and under-

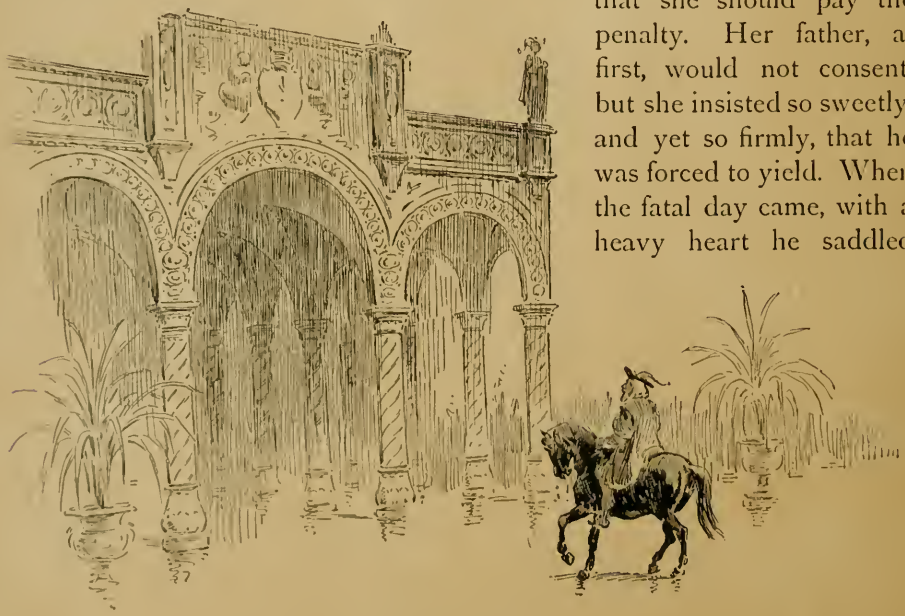
THE BEAST APPEARS TO THE MERCHANT.

stand, also, that if you break your word I will come and fetch you."

Although the merchant would not think for a moment of asking one of his children to take his place, he reflected that if he took the Beast's offer he should at least have a chance to bid them good-bye. So he accepted it, and the Beast allowed him to depart.

When he arrived at his home, he could hardly bring himself, at first, to relate what had happened; merely saying to Beauty as he handed her the rose, "Here is your gift, Beauty: you little know what it has cost." But these words distressed Beauty so much, and so excited the curiosity of the other daughters, that he was soon forced to tell them all.

Beauty at once announced her willingness to take his place, saying that as it was her request that had caused the disaster, it was only right that she should pay the penalty. Her father, at first, would not consent, but she insisted so sweetly, and yet so firmly, that he was forced to yield. When the fatal day came, with a heavy heart he saddled



THE PALACE ENTRANCE.

PLUCKING THE ROSE.

the horse, and taking Beauty behind him set out for the Beast's palace.

It was night when they reached the palace, which was brightly lighted in all parts. When they came to the entrance, the doors opened of themselves, and strains of exquisite music were heard. When they entered, unseen hands seemed to take theirs, and they were led into a room where a dainty meal was spread.

They sat down and eat a little, although, as may be supposed, they had not much appetite. When they had finished, they saw the door open and close, as if some one had entered, and presently a voice of terrible gruffness, which the merchant recognized as that of the Beast, was heard speaking.

"Well, old man," it said, "I see that you have been faithful to your word. Has your daughter come willingly, and will she be satisfied to stay when you go?"

Although the awful tones of the voice struck terror into Beauty's heart, she spoke up bravely and said that she was quite content to stay.

"That is well," said the voice, "you may remain. You, old man, may stay here to night, but to-morrow morning you must depart early, never to return."

The voice ceased, and the door

THE MERCHANT'S GRIEF.

opened and closed again, indicating that the Beast had left the room.

The invisible attendants then led Beauty and her father to the rooms in which they were to sleep. Over the door of that to which Beauty was conducted were inscribed the words "Beauty's Room," and when she entered it, she could not help feeling charmed with its tasteful magnificence. Every possible care had evidently been taken that nothing should be lacking that could add to her comfort or pleasure. Tired of wondering over the strangeness of all that she had seen, she went to bed, and after a while, fell asleep.

The next morning the merchant sadly bid his daughter good-bye, and started for home. Beauty watched her father out of sight; and then, having controlled her feelings up to this point for his sake, was forced to give way, and began to sob and weep as though her heart would break. But she was startled out of her tears by hearing a voice say, near by:—

"Weep not Beauty, nor feel alarm:
To thee shall come no hurt nor harm."

She looked about in surprise but could see no one. Somewhat comforted, she returned within the palace, and sought to occupy herself in exploring its many apartments.

A SAD JOURNEY.

BEAUTY IN HER ROOM IN THE PALACE.

She found so much to interest her that the hours passed rapidly, and almost before she knew it evening had come, and the invisible attendants began to light the innumerable wax candles that illuminated the palace. Then feeling hungry, she went to the room in which the table had been set, and there, as if her wishes had been read, she found supper awaiting her and the attentive hands ready to serve it. She sat down to eat, and presently the door opened and closed, as it had on the previous evening. She suspected that it was the Beast, and so was not surprised when she heard his voice say:

"Good evening, Beauty, I hope that you have been able to pass the day pleasantly." Beauty managed to conceal her terror, and replied that the time had passed very agreeably.

"I am pleased to hear it," said the Beast. "You must consider everything here as your own, and if you desire anything that you do not see, let me know and I shall take the greatest pleasure in providing it. I shall be present, in this way, every night when you sup, if you do not object to my company."

Beauty by this time had begun to feel quite sure that the Beast was not so very terrible after all, so she assured him that she had no objection whatever. He continued to converse with her in a way that, when one got used to the awful gruffness of his voice, seemed pleasant and intelligent; and by the time he took his leave, Beauty had formed quite a favorable opinion of him.

BEAUTY AND HER FATHER PARTING.

Several days passed, and Beauty grew to like the Beast so well that at last she began to feel a curiosity to see as well as hear him. So one evening when he made his usual in-

BEAUTY HEARS A VOICE.

quiry as to whether she had any wish that he could gratify, she said that she was tired of never seeing any one, and of being waited upon by beings that were invisible to her, and she asked him if he would not appear in his own form, and let those who attended her do the same.

"Ah, Beauty!" said he, "I am afraid that you will not be pleased with what you shall see; but as you request it, it shall be so."

Then he told her that on the morrow her attendants would be visible to her, and that if she would be in a certain place in the garden at an hour which he set, he would appear to her.

The next morning, when Beauty left her room she found four footmen awaiting her, having heads like apes, but dressed in the richest of liveries. They advanced with grace and deference, and escorted her down the stairway, and in the breakfast-room were other similar beings, who served the meal with the skill and propriety of well-trained servants. After the strangeness of their appearance had worn off a little, Beauty found the change an agreeable one, and the loneliness of her situation seemed much lessened by it.

She went to the place the Beast had appointed in the garden with feelings of dread and curiosity strangely mixed. She stood there a few moments, and presently heard footsteps approaching behind her. Turning, she beheld the Beast.

He was so very frightful, that Beauty, in spite of her desire not to offend him, could not refrain from a shudder; on seeing which he sighed, and said:

"Alas, Beauty! it is as I feared. You cannot endure the sight of my

THE BEAST ENTREATS BEAUTY TO PROMISE TO MARRY HIM.

dreadful shape. It is best that I should not afflict you with it."

Beauty was greatly touched by the sadness with which he said this. Thinking that custom would soon make his looks less hideous, she begged him to remain as he was, and the Beast showed his pleasure at this so plainly that Beauty felt rewarded for the effort it had cost her to overcome her dislike.

Several weeks passed

THE ATTENDANTS BECOME VISIBLE.

ONE OF THE ATTENDANTS.

away, and Beauty's life continued to be so pleasant that she would have been quite happy if it were not for the separation from her father and sisters. But at last this feeling became very keen, and her manner began to show it so clearly that the Beast was led to press her to say why she seemed so sad. When she told him of her longing to see her father, he said that he could gratify her in this, and that she would find in her room, the next day, a mirror in which she could see all that was passing at home.

You may be sure that when Beauty awoke the next morning, her eyes eagerly searched the walls of her room for the mirror; and that when

she found it, she ran to it in haste. But what she saw in it gave her heart a terrible pang. She saw her father sitting in a chair, propped up with pillows, pale and wasted, and seemingly not far from death. She was filled with anguish, and did little all day but weep and grieve.

As soon as the Beast came that evening, she began to beseech him most piteously to let her go to her father, if even for a few days only, saying that she felt sure his illness must be due to his grief over her absence. The Beast seemed so deeply distressed by her request, that for some moments he was unable to speak, but at last he said:

"Ah, Beauty, can you be so cruel as to desert me? I cannot live if you leave me!"

But Beauty continued to entreat him to let her go, and assured him that she would certainly return at the end of such time as he might set. The Beast seemed greatly moved, and at last he knelt before her and in a voice that trembled, said:

"Beauty, if I let you go, will you promise to marry me when you come back?"

"Oh! do not ask that, dear Beast,"

BEAUTY ENTREATS THE BEAST TO LET HER GO TO HER FATHER.

BEAUTY BIDS THE BEAST GOOD-BYE.

said Beauty, "I love you very much, but not enough for that."

"Well," said he, "I cannot bear to see you suffer, even if it should cost me my own life to gratify you. I will send you home to-morrow for a week. Put into the chest that is in your room anything you wish to take, either for your own use or as presents to your sisters, and it shall go with you. Take this ring, and when you desire to come back, put it on your finger before going to sleep, and wish to be here, and you will find yourself in the palace when you awake."

So Beauty that night packed up all the clothes that she thought she should need, and a number of trinkets and jewels for her sisters, and early the next morning bid good-bye to the Beast, and entered the carriage that awaited her at the palace entrance. The carriage went off at great speed, and soon drew up at the cottage of Beauty's father.

She rushed into the cottage, and into her father's arms, where he sat in his chair as she had seen him in the magic mirror. He opened his languid eyes, and when he saw his darling child it seemed as if new life came into them at once. He reached out his arms and clasped her to his breast while tears of joy ran down his cheeks. Her sisters, too, were glad to see her, and could not help

BEAUTY AND HER FATHER.

BEAUTY'S PAINFUL DREAM.

BEAUTY'S GIFTS TO HER SISTERS.

being pleased when they saw the beautiful presents she had brought them.

Beauty said nothing to her father at first about her promise to return to the Beast, thinking it best to wait until he had got stronger, which she felt sure he would do soon from the change in spirits he already showed. But she became so absorbed in her care for him, that she failed to notice the days as they passed quickly, and the week went by, and then another, and still she could not bring herself to tell him that she must leave him again so soon, and she went to bed every night without making use of the ring that was to transport her back to the palace.

But at last one night she had a most painful dream. She thought that she was wandering in the palace gardens, and as she passed along a lonely path she seemed to hear piteous groans. She was frightened, but overcoming her alarm, went in the direction of the sound. She soon came to an open space, and there, stretched out upon the ground, she saw the Beast lying, seemingly at his last gasp. She ran up and bent over him, when he opened his eyes, and casting a sad reproachful glance at her, said: "Farewell, Beauty, since you forsake me I care no more to live."

She awoke from this dream stricken with remorse, and made up her mind that this day should be her last at home. She announced her intention to her father and sisters, and when night came, before going to sleep, put on the ring and wished herself back at the palace.

She found herself there when she opened her eyes in the morning. That day seemed very long, in her

impatience to have the supper hour come, but when it arrived and passed without the Beast's appearing, she became greatly alarmed. Remembering her dream she thought she would search the grounds for him. She ran up and down the paths for a long time, and at last thought she heard faint moans. Following the sound she soon came into the presence of the Beast, where he lay extended upon his side, just as in the dream.

She knelt and spoke to him, but he gave no answer. She ran to a fountain near by, and brought water and dashed it into his face; when, to her delight, he revived a little, and opened his eyes.

"Ah, Beauty," said he faintly, "now that I see you once more, I shall die happy."

"No, no, dear Beast, you shall not die," said Beauty, in a voice of anguish. "You must live for my sake. Live, and I will be your wife."

But lo! as she said these words, a blaze of light illuminated the palace grounds, and strains of joyful music burst forth. Turning to the Beast to ask what it all meant, Beauty found that he had disappeared, while in his place stood a young and most handsome Prince, who took off his hat and bowed to her.

She knew not what to think, and asked the Prince timidly what had become of the Beast.

"You see him at your feet, Beauty," said he, kneeling to her, "for I am he. A wicked fairy had cast an enchantment over me, and I was condemned to wear the shape of a beast until some fair girl should love me enough to consent to marry me in spite of my horrible appearance. Let me hope that the affection I won from you while in that hideous form, will not cease to be

A SURPRISING TRANSFORMATION.

mine now that I have resumed my own."

Seeing by the happy smile upon Beauty's face that the change was not a disagreeable one to her, the Prince drew her toward him and kissed her.

Then he led her to the palace, at the entrance of which they found a great throng of richly dressed ladies and gentlemen, the Maids-of-Honor and Lords-in-Waiting of the Prince's court; who, by the power of the same enchantment that had afflicted the Prince, had been doomed to wear the forms of apes and monkeys; but who were now, with him, restored to their own shapes.

They received Beauty and the Prince with expressions of joy, and all entered the palace.

Here in the great hall they found

WEDDING OF BEAUTY AND THE PRINCE.

awaiting them, in the form of a beautiful, stately lady, a good fairy, who having been a friend of the Prince's mother, had watched over and protected him while he was under the evil spell, and by her kindly aid had done much to bring about the present happy state of affairs. She congratulated the Prince, and then turning to Beauty, said:

"I feel sure, charming girl, that you will never regret your noble act. You showed your good sense in preferring a faithful heart to a handsome face or form, and now you find all three in the same person. You will soon be a queen, but I have no fear that when you wear a crown, you will cease to be as good and true as you always have been."

Then, after promising to continue to give them her friendly protection, she disappeared.

The marriage of Beauty and the Prince took place within a short time, and was celebrated with the utmost splendor, the feasting and dancing being kept up for several days. Beauty sent for her father and sisters to share her happiness, and as she wished not to be parted from them again, they continued to live in the palace, and the sisters soon married lords of the Prince's court. Beauty lived with her husband in great happiness, and continued to be as kind and unselfish as ever, valuing the high station to which she had been lifted chiefly because it put into her hands the means of doing good to others.